



LINCOLN CHAFEE

U.S. SENATOR

RHODE ISLAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, December 16, 2003

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CHAFEE ANNOUNCES \$3 MILLION LABOR GRANT TO WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP OF GREATER RI

Funds to serve 650 in Biotechnology & Biomanufacturing

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee today announced that the U.S. Department of Labor has awarded a \$2,999,506 grant to the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island, Inc. This project will serve 650 individuals: 300 incumbent workers; 200 skilled adults transferring from other industries; and 150 unemployed/underemployed workers in the field of Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing.

On July 31, 2003, Senator Chafee wrote a letter of support for the Rhode Island Biotechnology/Biomanufacturing Initiative's (RIBBTI) application for a U.S. Department of Labor H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant, which read in part, "This effort is designed to improve the skills and education of the Rhode Island workforce to meet and sustain biotechnology/biomanufacturing industry needs – an effort I wholeheartedly endorse."

"In the context of these workforce development needs, I commend the initiative of the Rhode Island Technology Council (RITEC), a business consortium for the State's high tech sector, and the Workforce Partnership of Greater Rhode Island (WPGRI), one of two Workforce Investment Boards in Rhode Island, in spearheading the RIBBTI."

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Key participants of this program include the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Rhode Island Technology Council, University of Rhode Island, DOW Chemical Company, Amgen, and the Education Development Center. Additional partners may also include Rhodes, Spherics, Dominican Diagnostics, Neurotech, and Astromed.

Rhode Island state institutions are providing \$663,000 in matching funds and industry partners are providing an additional \$1,916,000.

Of the 300 incumbent workers to be trained, 225 will receive promotions and 195 will receive a 15 percent wage increase over the life of the grant. Of the 200 transitional workers, 180 will be hired in skills shortage positions with a minimum annual salary of \$35,000, and 90 will receive a promotion and minimum 5 percent wage increase before the end of the grant. Of the 150 unemployed workers, 135 will receive certifications and become employed in the skills shortages area; 65 will receive promotions and a minimum 5 percent wage increase before the end of the grant. Approximately 185 of all those participating will receive tuition reimbursement, allowing 90 to earn two-year degrees and 95 to earn four-year or advanced degrees.

Incumbent employees will be identified by their employer after careful scrutiny of their abilities. Employers will be required to develop a professional development plan for each incumbent worker candidate. All other trainees will be evaluated on a strict assessment process including math aptitude tests, one-on-one interviews, and reference checks.

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